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ABSTRACT

This history of the Bobbs-Merrill publishing company provides a chronological description of the personalities, activities, and events which influenced its development. Sections in the document include: Background and Origins; The Merger of 1885; The Fire and the Aftermath; Relocation; Sale of the Paper and "Notions" Trade; The New York Office; Indiana Literature; Entrepreneurship and Profit in the Early 1900s; Law Book Publishing; The Reorganization of 1908; The Bookstore; Textbook Publishing; Trade Publishing and Financial Stress, 1910-1916; The Renascence of the 1920s; Textbook and Law Book Salesmen; William Conrad Bobbs; John Jay Curtis; The Reorganization of 1929; The Meridian Street Offices; David Laurance Chambers; Children's Books; Law Publishing in the Depression; Trade Book Publishing in the Depression; World War II and After; Hiram Haydn and the Early 1950s; and Summary and Conclusions. References and the author's vita are included. (THC)

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# The Origins and History of the Bobbs-Merrill Company

by

Jack O'Bar

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## BACKGROUND AND ORIGINS

For the first 30 years of the present century, the Bobbs-Merrill Company was one of the leading book publishers in America. The company had risen to prominence at about the turn of the twentieth century, when it was 50 years old. Traditionally, the Bobbs-Merrill people have always maintained that the Indianapolis firm was established in 1838, with the founding of the Hood and Merrill bookstore by E.H. Hood and Samuel Merrill.

The claim that the publishing house originated with this venture by the two partners has some validity. Notwithstanding the statement "Founded in 1838," which used to be tastefully printed on the fawn-colored Bobbs-Merrill stationery, the partnership really came about in 1850.[1] The association of Hood with Merrill endured less than a year, ending when Merrill acquired Hood's interest and became the sole owner. Hood and Merrill was but one of four Indianapolis bookstores of that day. The other three were C.B. Davis, Ross and Ray, and John O'Kane and Sons.[2] Commenting on the state of the local trade at that time, the press observed: "We have in Indianapolis, among our advantages, four stores that will compare favorably with those of any town in the West."[3] Aware of the remoteness of Indianapolis from the Eastern centers of culture, the writer found consolation through asserting "the condition of the bookstores in a place is a sure index to the intelligence of the people."

At Merrill's death in 1855, his store passed into the hands of his only son, Samuel Merrill, Jr., and a son-in-law, Charles W. Moores.[4] After the death of Moores in the Civil War, the younger Merrill entered into a series of successive partnerships. During the years between the early 1860s and 1885, the identity of some of the different partners is reflected in the names under which the Merrill firms did business. First there was Merrill and Field, followed by Merrill and Hubbard, then came Merrill and Meigs, and finally the Bowen-Merrill Company.[5]

Bowen-Merrill was the name under which the Bobbs-Merrill Company was originally incorporated. Bowen-Merrill was formed in 1885 when Merrill and Meigs united with another Indianapolis book and stationery firm, Bowen, Stewart and Company.[6] The Merrill side of this new enterprise had a background in book publishing. The law booklist which had evolved from the various Merrill partnerships extended back to the early 1850s.[7]

Just two years before joining in the merger which created Bowen-Merrill, the Merrill and Meigs firm had come unexpectedly to the forefront of the

national publishing scene with a trade book which sold vigorously. Historian of the popular book, Frank Luther Mott, included among the titles he identified as the overall best-sellers in the United States, James Whitcomb Riley's *The Old Swimmin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems* (1883).[8] It was Riley's first book and had been privately printed earlier that same year in a limited edition.[9] The momentum which the issue of Riley's verses gave to the trade publishing efforts of Merrill and Meigs carried over into the Bowen-Merrill Company. In the years which would follow the merger of 1885, Bowen-Merrill would gradually evolve from an organization mainly concerned with local and regional wholesale and retail of books and stationery into a trade and specialties publishing house of national stature.

## THE MERGER OF 1885

Six of the seven stockholders of the newly created Bowen-Merrill Company met in Indianapolis on the Saturday evening of 4 January 1885, at the home of Charles D. Meigs, to elect officers and to approve the "Articles of Association" and the "Articles of Agreement." These documents, which were included in minutes of the meeting, have afforded insight into the purposes and structure of the company.

The incorporators and stockholders present, in addition to Meigs, included Samuel Merrill and William Elvin of Merrill and Company; representing the second merging firm were Silas T. Bowen, Alfred D. Clarke, and James H. Wilson. Bowen held the proxy of the absent Darwin G. Eaton. The "Articles of Association" described the objectives of the Bowen-Merrill Company as the manufacture and sale of blank and memorandum books, tablets, other articles of stationery, and printed books. In addition, the firm would purchase and resell through wholesale and retail, books, paper, stationery, school supplies, novelties, and other articles which were normally kept and sold by wholesale and retail book and stationery houses.[10]

Capital stock, which totaled $80,000, was distributed as follows: $45,000 among the merging partners from Merrill, Meigs and Company, with the remaining $35,000 held by the Bowen and Stewart representatives. The Bowen and Stewart partners were given the right to name two of the five directors provided for by the "Articles of Association." One of the two directors from Bowen, Stewart and Company would fill either the office of president or company superintendent. All copyrights and all salable merchandise, including Merrill, Meigs and Company publications, would be purchased by the new business. The company would be housed for a

minimum of five years in the Bowen, Stewart Building at 18 West Washington Street, the annual rent for a full year not to exceed $5000. The stockholders would elect the directors at the annual meeting. The directors would name the company officers. Directors chosen for the first year were Merrill, Meigs, Elvin, Bowen, and Clarke. Officers elected for the first year were Bowen as president, Merrill as superintendent, Meigs as secretary, and Elvin as treasurer. Salaries of the president and superintendent could not exceed $2000 annually, while those of the secretary and the treasurer were not to be more than $1800 each annually.[11]

The incorporators must have been uncertain about the extent of participation which they could expect from the aging president in the conduct of the business. Bowen was about 65 years old at the time. Although it was stated that he would exercise general management and supervision of the affairs of the company, he would be allowed to devote whatever portion of his time he desired to the business.[12]

Notwithstanding Bowen's activities as president, the bylaws also provided for a manager of the day-to-day affairs of Bowen-Merrill in the position of a superintendent, whose duties were specified. He was to be responsible for the general supervision of the wholesale business and the book and stationery store. Subject to the approval of the directors, he was empowered to employ and set the wages of agents and other personnel according to need.[13]

The return on investment received by Bowen-Merrill in the years immediately following the merger was recorded in the treasurer's annual reports. The return on investment is the annual profit expressed as a percentage of the owners' equity—in this case, the common stock of the company. Profits reported in June 1886 covered the first 16 months of operation and amounted to 3.5%.[14] Profits increased each year in the three-year period which followed, with the return on investment equaling an annual average of 16.3%.[15]

## THE FIRE AND THE AFTERMATH

The period of growing prosperity was not to endure without interruption. The business was jeopardized in March 1890, when a St. Patrick's Day fire broke out on the property. In an effort to prevent the blaze from spreading to other buildings, a team of firemen went onto the roof. As other fire fighters entered through the windows, the roof and all floors of the building collapsed killing 13 firemen and disabling several others.[16] The arduous and gloomy task of determining the extent of the loss to the firm fell on

the treasurer, William Elvin, who labored for months to complete the undertaking. The treasurer's report for 1890 could not be presented until a full year later; at that time Elvin reported that the fire had seriously impaired the company property, and had revealed the neglected condition of the records of the firm. Nevertheless, he told the stockholders that the business of the firm had exceeded that of any year in its history. Elvin went on to add that this volume of trade, had it not been for the fire, would have allowed him to make a most gratifying report.[17] While the total loss to the firm was in the neighborhood of $31,000, the treasurer concluded in a vein of optimism. He assured the stockholders that their firm was not irretrievably ruined, and he anticipated that in two or three years the company would regain its old positions and possibly a better one.[18]

In order to bring in new capital to replace the loss, the firm underwent reorganization in 1891 under terms similar to those of the original incorporation. The partners—Bowen, Elvin, Wilson, Meigs, and Charles White Merrill, the son of Samuel Merrill—worked with a capital stock of $80,000.[19] Young Merrill, who was 31 years old, had been with Bowen-Merrill since the company was organized, having come over with the Merrill and Meigs side of the partnership. It seems that he was an editor, probably in the Trade Book Department.[20] In 1890, he succeeded to his father's interest in the business.[21] For most of the time until his death 30 years later, he would serve as company treasurer.[22] The last of the founding family to bear any connection with the firm, Charles Merrill at no time assumed a role of leadership in the affairs of Bobbs-Merrill.

Samuel Merrill gave his Bowen-Merrill holdings to his son when he accepted an appointment from President Benjamin Harrision as U.S. consul general at Calcutta in 1890. He retained this diplomatic post until 1894, after which he retired to his country place in California, north of Los Angeles, on the slopes of the Sierra Madres where he lived surrounded by his lemon and orange groves. He moved to Long Beach in 1902, remaining there to the end of his life 20 years later.[23] Merrill, the first of the original incorporators to depart the firm, was soon followed by Meigs whose name does not appear in the company records after 1891. The withdrawal of Merrill and Meigs made way for younger men including W.C. Bobbs and John Curtis whose participation in the 1892 stockholders' meeting was the beginning of their rise from lesser positions to become major stockholders and directors. Each would successively serve as the company president in the period following the fire.[24]

## RELOCATION

After the destruction of the building at 18 West Washington Street, the Bowen-Merrill Company, the largest book and stationery store in Indiana, occupied temporary quarters before moving, either in 1890 or in the early part of the following year,[25] into the building which stood at 911 West Washington Street. This structure housed all of the Bowen-Merrill business except that related to book publishing and blank book manufacture which were carried on elsewhere in the city.

The four-story building extended from Washington Street through the block and opened on Pearl Street. The retail store and the general offices occupied the first floor. The second floor contained the display of wholesale stock, while the third and fourth floors were devoted to shipping and receiving. The basement, used to house the paper stock, provided storage adequate for a large railway trainload. The Bowen-Merrill paper trade consumed the entire product of a number of paper mills and much of the output of several more.[26]

## SALE OF THE PAPER AND "NOTIONS" TRADE

In 1896, Bowen-Merrill narrowed the scope of its activities. That year the firm sold the paper trade to the Crescent Paper Company of Indianapolis.[27] At about the same time, William Elvin and James Wilson, original Bowen-Merrill incorporators, joined with Richard Barnes to form the Indianapolis Book and Stationery Company which began operation with the purchase of part of the Bowen-Merrill trade including its "notions."[28]

## THE NEW YORK OFFICE

Having disposed of the paper trade, the company pursued its publishing activity. To this end, John Curtis moved to New York in 1900 and established there a branch office of the Indianapolis firm. American book trade historian Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt once observed: "Indianapolis with the Bowen-Merrill Company (later Bobbs-Merrill) furnishes a solitary example of successfully continued, general publishing outside the great centers."[29] Lehmann-Haupt did not explain the phenomenon. The truth is that Bobbs-Merrill was never really outside the great centers at any time during its period of success with popular literature. By the turn of the century, New York had become the hub of the publishing industry in the Western world. Curtis, who remained in that city as manager of the Eastern

office for nearly 20 years, perceived and interpreted for the Indiana-based firm the direction of American book publishing.

Curtis retired to Hollywood, California in 1919. He was followed in the New York office by a succession of bright young men, capable of continuing the same kind of service to the firm. It is ironic that often during the 1920s and 1930s the position of Eastern editorial representative only served to give its incumbents the necessary boot-camp training for positions of prominence with rival firms. But they were often outstanding editors whose continued advancement, either within or outside of Bobbs-Merrill, was inevitable.

In 1927, Thomas R. Coward, who had run the Eastern office for five years, joined with the firm's Indianapolis sales manager, James A. McCann, to form a new publishing house, Coward-McCann.[30] Coward was succeeded at Bobbs-Merrill by George J. Shively who was Eastern representative from 1927 through 1934.[31] He was subsequently connected with the firms of Frederick A. Stokes; the Greystone Press; Appleton-Century; and Doubleday, Doran.[32]

Next to Curtis the best-known editor to occupy the Eastern office was Lynn Carrick who was employed by Bobbs-Merrill from 1934 to 1937.[33] Later Carrick distinguished himself as Lippincott's New York editor. John Farrar—of Farrar, Straus and Giroux—included Carrick in his list of great editors of recent times along with Maxwell Perkins, Ben Huebsch, Saxe Commins, and Pascal Covici.[34]

The New York office created advertising copy, conducted talent searches, and maintained relations with Eastern authors. Its managers served as intelligence for Indianapolis from the center of publishing, providing the middle western house with the sensitive antennae required for the success to which Lehmann-Haupt referred. Through its New York and Indianapolis offices, Bobbs-Merrill was able to enjoy the better part of two worlds. While Curtis and those who followed after him kept in touch with the cosmopolitan and internationally-oriented literary circles of the East, as exemplified by novelists John Erskine, Emily Hahn, and Pietro diDonato, the Indianapolis office attracted to itself the popular authors of Indiana and other middle American states.

## INDIANA LITERATURE

The Hoosier literary movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was described by R.E. Banta, compiler of a well-known reference

work on Indiana authors: "Literature grew as naturally and as luxuriantly as the horseweed along the banks of the quiet Indiana streams."[35] The extensive sale of the books of Indiana authors from 1900 through 1939 has been studied by the late John H. Moriarty, director of libraries at Purdue University. Although the abundance of Indiana literature from this period had often been noted, the results of the Moriarty investigation must have surprised many. The study was based on an analysis of the first edition of Hackett's work, *Fifty Years of Best Sellers* (Bowker, 1945). A score of ten was assigned to the best-selling novel for each year. Second place best-sellers each received a score of nine, third place books a score of eight, and so on down the list of the top ten. The birthplace of each American-born author was determined, and his score was given to his native state. In the study as it originally appeared, Indiana placed first with a score of 216, while New York followed in a very close second place with 215.[36] Correction of an error resulted in a revision of the study, putting New York ahead of Indiana by five points. Following are the top ten states and their scores:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. New York | 218 |
| 2. Indiana | 213 |
| 3. Pennsylvania | 125 |
| 4. Virginia | 102 |
| 5. Kentucky | 94 |
| 6. Missouri | 80 |
| 7. Ohio | 73 |
| 8. Michigan | 70 |
| 9. Minnesota | 67 |
| 10. California | 64 |

Moriarty's computations show that during the 40 year period, Indiana had far more authors of best-selling books than any state except New York. The results of the revised study are still remarkable when the facts of relative populations are considered. New York, during the years studied, averaged nearly four times the population of Indiana, giving New York almost four times as many potential authors.[37]

Moriarty attempted to account for the national preference for the literature of the Hoosier state:

> The pre-eminence of Indiana in the year-in, year-out popularity of its authors is not too easy to explain. The Hoosier state is a middling one in most other respects, not at the top or bottom among the states in population, resources, size, or location. It is not the oldest or youngest in history; not all cities nor all country. It is hard to find a social or economic condition in which Indiana is very outstanding or very deficient either, except in this top popularity of its authors.

> An explanation which may or may not be true, is that it is its very middling quality, which the state has passed on to its writers, that has made them and their fiction acceptable to wide audiences, North and South, East and West. It certainly can be argued that wide popularity of novels does depend on their expression of ideas not too alien to their readers.[38]

Moriarty's speculations may possess some plausibility; but he nevertheless overlooked the fact that Indiana possessed an additional characteristic which encouraged its literary development. The presence of a publishing house of national stature, which favored homegrown literature with middle western appeal was an enormous asset to the Indiana movement. The pleasure of Bobbs-Merrill in publishing such "clean, wholesome, and spirited manuscripts" was doubly keen when exactly these works accounted for profit through their marketability to the rest of the country.[39] It is reasonable to assume that the proximity of influential publishing firms and literary activity is no coincidence. After all, in the Moriarty study, the number one and the number three states in the production of popular literature are New York and Pennsylvania, both of which encompass national publishing centers—i.e., New York City and Philadelphia.

The Bobbs-Merrill contribution to Indiana literature is apparent when it is realized that by 1957 the firm had published the works of more than 100 of the authors of the state.[40] Most of these writers were productive in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. Some of the better known Hoosiers on the Bobbs-Merrill lists are George Ade, Mary Hartwell Catherwood, Elmer Davis, Ken Hubbard, Charles Major, Elizabeth Miller, Meredith Nicholson, David Graham Phillips, Gene Stratton Porter, James Whitcomb Riley, Maurice Thompson, and Paul Wilstach.

In 1940, when D.L. Chambers deplored the lack of Indiana writers at that time, the period of literary productivity in the state had indeed passed its peak. The comparatively few Hoosier authors whose works thereafter were to find outlet through Bobbs-Merrill were primarily children's authors whose books formed a part of the Childhood of Famous Americans series.[41]

Missing from the Bobbs-Merrill trade lists before 1949 were the works of the two authors who made Indiana's most significant contribution to American literature: Theodore Dreiser and Booth Tarkington. Like America in general, Indiana was insensitive to, and more than half-ashamed of, Dreiser's unconventional and rebellious genius. In the early 1900s he was rebuffed by such Eastern firms as Harper and Doubleday, Page.[42] A publishing arrangement between him and the conservative Indianapolis firm

would have been impossible. Such was not the case with Tarkington whose wit and genial satire blended as harmoniously into the American literary landscape as did that of Mark Twain. Tarkington was an intimate friend of Chambers, who never concealed his hope that the author might someday publish through Bobbs-Merrill. Tarkington, who had begun his writing career with McClure, held the traditional view that a writer should keep his works with one publisher. He feared a change would prove detrimental to his standing.[43] It was not until 1949 that Chambers was, at last, to realize his hope of publishing a Tarkington book. At that time, three years after Tarkington's death, Bobbs-Merrill was permitted to issue a volume of his correspondence with two nephews under the title *Your Amiable Uncle*. The book appeared just 50 years after Tarkington's first novel, *The Gentlemen from Indiana* (1899), had been issued over the imprint of Doubleday and McClure. It was the same year in which William Elvin, the last of the original incorporators, severed his connection with the firm he had helped to found.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PROFIT IN THE EARLY 1900S

Elvin surrendered his two remaining shares after the 1899 annual meeting, the last over which he presided.[44] At this time Charles W. Merrill occupied the position of company treasurer. He had done so since 1892 when he succeeded Elvin at the post.[45] By 1900 Merrill, Curtis, and Bobbs owned among them 81% of the stock and also controlled the firm as managers.[46] From 1900 through 1903 the firm earned astonishing profits. The profits accrued from three best-selling novels and several other books. The best-selling novels were *When Knighthood was in Flower, Alice of Old Vincennes,* and *The Puppet Crown*. Table 1 shows the dividends paid to stockholders each year for the period 1900 through 1903. It was in 1903 that an action of the board changed the name from Bowen-Merrill to Bobbs-Merrill.[47]

TABLE 1

ANNUAL EARNINGS OF COMMON STOCKHOLDERS

| *Year* | *Dividend Paid* |
|---|---|
| 1900 | 25.0% |
| 1901 | 40.0% |
| 1902 | 7.0% |
| 1903 | 20.0% |
| Average | 23.0% |

It was the genius of Curtis more than anything else which had accounted for the financial success of the partnership. Stockholders recognized their debt to him with the adoption of a resolution at the annual meeting in 1900:

> Whereas, the earnings of the Publication Department during the past year are more than double the total earnings of all departments of the entire house for any previous year, and whereas this result is due most directly to the judgement, ability, and effort of Mr. John J. Curtis, manager of the Publication Department; therefore, be it resolved that the stockholders of the Bowen-Merrill Company hereby vote Mr. Curtis this cordial expression of their sincere thanks for his efforts in their behalf, and direct the treasurer of this company to present Mr. Curtis one thousand dollars as a substantial evidence of their genuine appreciation.[48]

The mode of sensational mass advertising which Curtis employed sold books for his firm and gained him a reputation for entrepreneurship.[49] Curtis did not invent this style of selling. There had been experimentation in the 1890s by men not regarded by the trade as "regular publishers"; among these was A.C. Gunter who widely advertised his own books. However, publishers in general had ignored such innovation. It was Curtis who actually mastered the use of the technique which would become the Bowen-Merrill and Bobbs-Merrill vehicle for creating best-sellers. He repeated the success several times over in rapid succession, bringing his style of advertising sharply to the attention of the trade.[50] In 1900 the Indianapolis firm became the first publisher to take a full-page advertisement in a newspaper.[51]

Before Curtis began to influence the American book trade, illustration was rarely used in book advertising. Ads in newspapers and magazines were simple lists giving author, title, price, and perhaps a favorable line quoted from a published review or from a solicited endorsement by some well-known person.[52] Bowen-Merrill and Bobbs-Merrill ads printed in the media were often spectacularly large and colorful. The beautiful heroines of fiction gazed out of advertisements appearing simultaneously from coast to coast in 20 or more metropolitan dailies and twice as many smaller local papers in the United States and Canada. The Indianapolis firm was also among the first publishing houses to discard the traditional plain, brown-paper dust wrappers in favor of the brightly-colored book jacket which has been a standard in the industry ever since.[53] Old-line publishers of the Eastern Seaboard were shocked by the spectacle of newcomers to the trade who cast off restraint and peddled books like any other household ware.[54] Walter hines Page of Doubleday, Page, and Company, spokesman

for the traditionalists, did not conceal his contempt for the new mode of advertising and the typical product with which it was concerned:

> A man or woman writes a story (let us call it a story, though it may be a mild mush of mustard, warranted to redden the faded cheeks of sickened sentimentality) which, for some reason that nobody can explain, has the same possibilities of popularity as Salvation Soap. A saponaceous publisher puts it out; he advertises it in his soapy way; people buy it, sometimes two hundred or three hundred thousand of them.[56]

Page disputed the notion that a new way had been found to sell books. He argued that only now and then did a novel have a big "run" by this method. The public, he contended, saw the occasional, accidental success, and not the hundreds of publishing failures.[56] Notwithstanding Page's argument, Bobbs-Merrill made such advertising effective for several years. From 1899 through 1909 the Indianapolis publisher produced 16 novels whose exceptionally large sales placed each of them among the nation's top ten best-selling books of the year for one or more years.[57]

Also significant to the reputation of the firm in this period were other fiction titles whose sales, though not quite at the top, were nevertheless notably successful. These books, now little read, were by popular authors of that day. Their names are found in the "Complete Back List of Adult Titles from Bobbs-Merrill," a mimeograph bibliography which forms a part of the Bobbs-Merrill manuscripts collection in the Lilly Library of Indiana University, Bloomington. Best-selling and near best-selling authors on the list include Charles Major, Maurice Thompson, Harold McGrath, Emerson Hough, Miriam Michelson, Meredith Nicholson, Hallie Ermine Rives, Mary Hartwell Catherwood, Anna Katherine Green, James Oliver Curwood, Brand Whitlock, Earl Derr Biggers, Gene Stratton Porter, Ford Maddox Ford, and Mary Roberts Rinehart. The last mentioned author was the best-known popular fiction writer in America during the first 40 years of the twentieth century.[58]

## LAW BOOK PUBLISHING

Outside Indiana the reputation of the company rested on its fiction. At the same time, its law book line was profitable. Merrill and Meigs, one of the firms which combined to form Bowen-Merrill, had brought with its book stock, plates and copyrights for several well-established titles.[59] Two dozen law publications may be found in the 1885 Bowen-Merrill catalog. They are mostly concerned with Indiana law, and include the session laws, some indexes and digests, and works on pleading. Some of the titles on the list are publications of Merrill and Meigs and Bowen-Merrill, while several

more are works published by other law book firms, with Bowen-Merrill serving as a distributor.

In 1898, Bowen-Merrill strengthened its line with the purchase of the Houghton Mifflin law list, and at the same time, obtained rights to 125 volumes from the American Publishers Company. Thereafter the law list included the works of well-known jurists such as Charles Fisk Beach, Judah P. Benjamin, and Leonard A. Jones.[60] Some titles thus acquired, or their subsequent revisions, were listed in the catalog until the post world war period. Other prominent jurists whose books Bobbs-Merrill published at about the turn of the century included Byron K. Elliott and Seymour D. Thompson.[61]

From about 1899 to 1908 the combined profits of trade and law publishing averaged approximately $45,000 annually. Nevertheless, in 1908 the firm trembled on the edge of bankruptcy as a result of losses through magazine publishing. Bobbs-Merrill had purchased the *Reader* in 1904 and the *Home Magazine* in 1906. The magazines lost money and were both sold in 1908 as a part of the reorganization which occurred that year.[62]

## THE REORGANIZATION OF 1908

The reorganization was the result of a corporate indebtedness in excess of $750,000. Most Bobbs-Merrill creditors agreed to accept 25% cash payable in 30 days, the balance due with interest in one-,two-,and three-year notes. Each note was equal to 25% of the total debt. The tangible assets at the time totaled $650,000 leaving a deficit of $125,000. The deficit was more than covered by the new working capital ($150,000) which was brought into the firm. Intangible assets included plates and copyrights thought to be worth upward of $300,000.[63]

The press reported that there was widespread sympathy in Indiana for the plight of the firm whose publishing activity had focused outside attention on the state for more than 20 years. Indiana bankers financed the reorganization without requiring a change of management.[64] Curtis, Bobbs, and Merrill were obliged to surrender, among themselves, stock valued at $225,000 for resale to other members of the firm at a price to be not less than one-third of the face value; but the three managing partners retained the controlling interest.[65] In the reorganization, Bobbs-Merrill got out of magazine publishing, and the officers resolved to specialize in the publication of books. To this end, they sold the bookstore in 1909.[66]

## THE BOOKSTORE

From 1885 to 1909 the bookstore had served as a local outlet for publications of the firm. More important was the fact that it supplied most other books and magazines in popular demand. The writer of a nostalgic story printed in a newspaper 50 years later indicated that in the late 1880s the bookstore had occupied a prominent place in the cultural life of the community. He recalled Magazine Day and the bustle of activity it brought to the premises of Bowen-Merrill and its two rival firms, the Cathcart and Clelland store and that of Yohn Brothers. Magazine Day was a monthly event which saw the arrival of popular magazines such as *Harper's, St. Nicholas,* and the *Century*. Regular subscribers, as well as the more casual purchasers, would call at bookstores for their copies. The crowded stores were marked outside by lines of carriages and restless horses. Coachmen and horses participated in the ritual of fetching home the new magazines for readers who waited for the latest installment of *Trilby* or some other thriller.[67]

The author of a local guidebook published in 1907 described the store with its shelves of general literature and its great stacks of new novels. At the back of the store were displayed first editions and the ornate editions which characterized the book trade of that age.[68] A wide selection of periodical titles was available from the magazine counter.[69] The Bobbs-Merrill Company divested itself of the bookstore in 1909 with the sale of that portion of the business to William Kerfoot Stewart, a Bobbs-Merrill sales manager. Stewart's family had earlier connections with the Indianapolis firm. His grandfather, William Stewart, had been a cofounder of Stewart, Bowen, and Company. The same firm later became Bowen, Stewart and Company, one of the organizations which merged to produce Bowen-Merrill.[70] The younger Stewart also acquired the old Robert Clarke Company of Cincinnati, one of the largest book and stationery firms in that part of the country.[71]

Over the years the bookstore, renamed the W.K. Stewart Company, continued a close relationship with Bobbs-Merrill. The store remained in the building at 911 West Washington Street where the publishing business was conducted. A year after the sale of the bookstore, the building passed into the hands of a new owner who required the space for another use. It was necessary for Bobbs-Merrill to move. The publishers obtained a plot of land on the north side of University Square and proceeded, in about 1910, to have erected the five-story building of red brick with the white marble pillars which they would occupy for approximately 16 years.[72] There the company devoted its energies exclusively to publishing, except that it

continued to be an outlet for the law books of other houses. The concentration on book publishing brought no immediate upturn in company fortunes.

## TEXTBOOK PUBLISHING

George P. Brett of Macmillan had commented in 1913 on the brief duration of the life of a best-selling novel. Brett further noted that quality literature such as books of essays and poetry made little or no money for their publisher. To remain in business the publisher of serious literature must subsidize his quality books by engaging in a profitable specialty such as law books or textbooks.[73] Four years before Brett made these observations, Bobbs-Merrill, already into law books, had sought to strengthen its own publication lines through entry into the textbook field. The initial effort was with an elementary school reader series, the Child Classics (1909).[74]

The way seemed open to such a venture. The American Book Company (ABC), which had effectually monopolized textbooks for more than 20 years, had recently lost much of its influence. Ginn and Company, the only major house which had been able to withstand the power of ABC, was flourishing. In 1909, Scribner was also back in the field with at least one textbook series. John Carr entered upon the scene in 1911. Bobbs-Merrill employed him to organize an Educational Publishing Department, the initial thrust of which was to be directed toward securing state adoption of the Child Classics. The compilers of the readers, Georgia Alexander and Grace Alexander, were two sisters in the employ of the Indianapolis school system. Georgia Alexander was a teacher and Grace was an elementary principal.[75] Although Carr once spoke disparagingly of their books, privately characterizing them as "a freakish sort of primary readers," he nevertheless worked diligently on behalf of the readers, securing their adoption in the Indiana schools, first, in 1914, and again, after a keenly competitive struggle, in 1919.[76]

Carr could not have been fond of the Alexanders. They completely failed to recognize his conscientious effort to sell their readers. Georgia wrote gossipy and conspiratorial letters in which she attempted to undercut him with his employer, W.C. Bobbs.[77]

Although Bobbs-Merrill was able to market 3 million copies of the readers, making wealthy their compilers, the company lost money in the venture.[78] The prewar bid had been submitted to the state in 1914 when manufacturing costs were extremely low. The contract was subsequently carried out in

a period of wartime inflation which did not allow recovery of the investment.[79]

## TRADE PUBLISHING AND FINANCIAL STRESS, 1910-1916

At this time trade publishing was also unprofitable for the firm. Working capital was inadequate and earnings from investment in Bobbs-Merrill stock were meager. As George Brett had observed in the pages of the *Atlantic*, part of the difficulty was attributable to the national trend.[80] The golden age of fiction was nearing an end, with nonfiction titles gaining in sales. Examination of the Bobbs-Merrill royalty records for fiction titles indicates that none approached the sale attained by similar works in the previous decade. The historical novel, the genre which Curtis had exploited, was now out of favor.[81] With two runaway best-sellers at Bobbs-Merrill in 1910, Mary Roberts Rinehart gave the firm a book each year during the next three years.[82] Royalty records indicate that the sale of each collapsed prematurely. The booksellers returned a deluge of unsold copies, with William Bobbs directing that the loss be charged back to Rinehart's account.[83] The disgruntled author took her next book to Houghton Mifflin.[84]

The condition of the Trade Department in 1914 led the Board of Directors of Bobbs-Merrill to reconsider the pay of each employee in that department and in the New York office. Most of the persons affected received a pay decrement of 10%, while some were placed on leave without pay for an indefinite period.[85] In 1914, John Curtis got a reduction in pay, as did Hewitt H. Howland the trade editor, and David Laurance Chambers who would someday become the trade editor. Chambers's annual salary was, in fact, reduced from $4000 to $3000.[86]

In that same year the continued deficit brought trade book advertising under scrutiny by the board. The board made some profound changes in the policy. Single title advertising, a method by which Curtis had transformed books into best-sellers, was no longer found to be profitable and was abandoned.[87] The failure of the Curtis technique may be attributed to the great number of titles which the Trade Department now carried. The trade list which was composed of about 100 titles in 1901 had increased to more than 600 in 1915. A large budget expended upon one book meant that many others received little or no advertising. As the list grew, it had become more and more difficult to know which titles merited separate treatment. The favorable sale of one book meant that its profits must cover the losses of many others. The firm which had shown the industry a new way to sell

books returned to the traditional practice of list advertising. The board declared that a book might be treated separately when the profit from its sale was equal to the cost of such treatment.[88] But single title advertising was seldom, if ever, practiced at Bobbs-Merrill again. In the same policy statement which dealt with single titles, the board declared that the list advertising would include only books whose sales were considered to be sufficient to warrant the expense.[89] A new book must get its start through the circularization of jobbers and bookstores. Published book reviews were rarely of significance in the stimulation of sales.

The board went further in limiting Curtis's influence. Accountants would determine which titles had earned the right to be advertised. The home office would approve the media to be used as well as the advertising copy.[90] The board had acted to curtail the authority of Curtis. Through board action the organizational talents of W.C. Bobbs took precedence over the brilliant, but often unpredictable, insights of Curtis. Through the genius of Curtis the firm had become established as a national publisher; but the heuristics which guided him in decisions affecting the small trade book operation of 1901 were not equal to the needs of the complex business which had evolved. Bobbs had taken the initiative in coordinating the activities of the New York office with those of the home office.

But these actions, however desirable, were not the ultimate solution to problems with trade books. Before 1916 ended, the board was forced to consider abolishing both the Trade Department and the New York Office. The decision to continue involved more cost reductions. In New York, funds for salaries, rent, and maintenance were reduced. In Indianapolis, savings were made in sales expenses. With these economies the budget was balanced and trade books earned a small profit that year.[91]

## THE RENASCENCE OF THE 1920S

After 1916 the financial crises gradually passed. Earnings of the three publishing departments showed an upward swing in the early 1920s. Profit and loss for each year of the period is found in the stockholders' minutes, and is summarized in table 2. The Trade Department had a deficit in 1917 and again in 1922 when a depression gripped the country.[92] The losses were offset five years later when the record earnings of the department were greater than the total annual income for all departments of the firm for most years. In this period Bobbs-Merrill made enormous profits from a succession of best-sellers whose prominence surpassed those on its early day trade list. Bobbs-Merrill books which were found among the nation's

ten best-selling books of the year for one or more years were: Albert Wiggan's *The New Decalogue of Science* (1923), Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows* (©1925), John Erskine's *Private Life of Helen of Troy* (©1925), Richard Halliburton's *The Royal Road to Romance* (©1925), and his *The Glorious Adventure* (©1927), and Julia Peterkin's *Scarlet Sister Mary* (©1929).[93] The latter book was awarded a Pulitzer Prize the year it was published.[94] None of these books retain their popularity today.

TABLE 2
EARNINGS AND LOSSES BY BOBBS-MERRILL PUBLISHING DEPARTMENTS 1917-1930

| *Year* | *Trade* | *Law* | *Education* | *Combined* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1917 | $ -19,561 | $ 21,019 | $ 10,277 | $ 11,735 |
| 1918 | 36,309 | 56,178 | 44,942 | 137,429 |
| 1919 | 15,528 | 41,102 | 21,960 | 78,590 |
| 1920 | 17,162 | 67,726 | 26,360 | 111,248 |
| 1921 | 9,006 | 54,553 | 17,587 | 81,146 |
| 1922 | -12,010 | 71,257 | 89,569 | 148,816 |
| 1923 | 20,135 | 65,327 | 51,582 | 137,044 |
| 1924 | 13,458 | 42,769 | 50,230 | 106,457 |
| 1925 | 34,411 | 61,721 | 106,293 | 202,425 |
| 1926 | 97,786 | 64,110 | 118,734 | 280,630 |
| 1927 | 220,092 | 55,704 | 81,623 | 357,419 |
| 1928 | 140,118 | 65,046 | 105,660 | 310,824 |
| 1929 | 58,032 | 27,655 | 122,722 | 208,409 |
| 1930 | 60,024 | 67,284 | 86,577 | 213,885 |
| Total | $690,490 | $761,451 | $934,116 | $2,386,057 |
| Annual Average | $ 49,321 | $ 54,389 | $ 66,723 | $ 170,433 |
| Percentage of Total | 29% | 32% | 39% | 100% |

But biographical works issued by the Trade Department between the two wars have possessed lasting qualities. These include the spirited account of the life of Sam Houston, *The Raven* (©1929), and *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (©1938), both by Marquis James. Each of these works was a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, the first in 1930 and the second in 1938. *Andrew Jackson* was also distributed as a Book-of-the-Month Club dividend in 1938.[95] In 1930, the Hawthornden prize for "the best piece of imaginative prose or verse by a British writer under 41 years old" was awarded to Lord David Cecil for his *Stricken Deer* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1930), a life of William Cowper.[96] Thirty-four individual biographies of Americans, exclusive of literary biographies, have been identified as such from

their titles in the *Complete Back List of Adult Titles From Bobbs-Merrill.* Twenty-eight of these were published after 1915. Of the 34 biographies, 16 are listed in the *Harvard Guide to American History* (1963). According to the preface of the *Harvard Guide,* the editors of this standard bibliography confined the listings to a rigorous selection from among the items believed to be most useful for the present-day needs.[97] A number of literary biographies published by Bobbs-Merrill have not been considered in the count of titles because their content, as often as not, is concerned with criticism as much as with biography.

Seven of sixteen monographic works on American history, published by Bobbs-Merrill before 1941, are also included in *The Harvard Guide to American History.*[98] Despite the high quality of some of these historical publications, Bobbs-Merrill has never had an annual best-seller in the field of history.

In the public view the trade list eclipsed the firm's activity with textbooks and law books. But these two specialties were of great importance in the financial pattern. The Law Book Department earned almost as much as the Trade Department; and the Educational Publishing Department earned significantly more than either Law or Trade (see table 3).

TABLE 3
EARNINGS FROM BOOK SALES
BY DEPARTMENT, 1920-1929

| *Department* | *Amount* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Educational | $ 770,360 | 39.6 |
| Trade | 598,190 | 30.8 |
| Law | 575,868 | 29.6 |
| Total | $1,944,418 | 100% |

## TEXTBOOK AND LAW BOOK SALESMEN

Bobbs-Merrill textbooks were widely promoted by means of traveling agents. As early as 1919, John Carr, educational publishing manager, had assembled what he described as an outstanding team of well-paid textbook salesmen. Carr had recruited his men at the expense of other schoolbook publishing companies. These were firms whose business had deteriorated through wartime curtailment of textbook adoptions and the national flu epidemic of 1918. Both events had served to reduce school attendance.[99]

Law books, like textbooks, were sold by agents. Charles C. Kryter, who would become a vice-president in 1929, was the law book sales manager by 1913. He probably had occupied the position at an earlier date.[100] Kryter's sales team was central to the information system which was often the means of decision-making in the Law Department. The continued existence of the publishing house was dependent upon a profit. Profit accrued when the organization was responsive to need. The Law Department editors and officers were able to respond to the needs of members of the American bar because their publishing effort was shaped from information gathered by the law book sales staff. In the period studied here, a great demand for law books was generated by the lawyers in the county seats of mid-America. These men led professionally isolated lives. Typically, there were two or three of them in a town. Because they usually met as adversaries, their contacts with each other did not fill a need for collegiality. The traveling law book salesman came twice a year to small, cluttered offices in narrow-fronted brick buildings on Main Street. He was a welcome caller. He brought news of the bar, professional gossip, and a line of clean, new calfskin books. Lawyers who could not find in print the information they required in the practice of law turned to him. The salesman who listened to them knew better than authors and editors what the lawyers wanted to find in their books.[101]

The company correspondence recorded many instances in which a salesman asked for the revision of a standard work or for a new work on a subject for which he perceived a demand. The editors constantly put questions to the salesmen. How does Mr. Green stand as a writer in your territory?[102] Shall we issue this work in two or in three volumes?[103] Shall we attempt once more to buy Mason's rights to his *Oregon Statutes* or can we afford to ignore the competition?[104] Can you help us locate a competent author for a text on guaranty and suretyship?[105] Should the price of a particular work, including one year's upkeep, be 15 or 20 dollars?[106] Authors at work on a manuscript sometimes asked for the help of salesmen—e.g., "I would like to receive from your company any examples of trust mortgages which your salesmen have collected for me from over the country."[107] Frequently the editors put the same question to the entire sales force, obtaining agreement or sometimes a variety of proposed solutions from which to choose.[108]

Over the years Bobbs-Merrill published for, and sold to, lawyers in 15 states. Nine states were included in the law territory which the company covered in the 1920s. It was in this period that the firm lost its third president—W.C. Bobbs died suddenly in 1926, the victim of a heart condition.[109]

## WILLIAM CONRAD BOBBS

Bobbs, who had been president for about 26 years, died when he was 65. He was survived by his second wife, Ruth Pratt Bobbs, and their son, Julian Bobbs.[110] During his presidency, he exercised a considerable amount of control over the business, even after it had developed into a bureaucracy of diverse publishing departments, each under a seasoned manager. Upon Bobbs's death, John Carr observed of him that he had left the business in good condition and thoroughly organized down to the last detail. Carr felt the business would go on exactly as it had been going on in the past.[111] John Curtis succeeded Bobbs as president.

## JOHN JAY CURTIS

After 19 years as Eastern editorial representative in the New York office, which he established, Curtis had moved to Hollywood, California, in 1919, into a home which he and his wife named "Dunwandering." Curtis came to California with the intention of living in semiretirement; he opened a West Coast office for the purpose of looking after Bobbs-Merrill's motion picture interests.[112] The sale of motion picture rights was becoming a significant source of income for the firm. In a newspaper interview published in the *Indianapolis News* in 1924, Chambers described this aspect of the business; he said that when Hollywood began to look for books to make into motion pictures, Bobbs-Merrill was "sitting on the front row" with books such as *When Knighthood Was in Flower, Alice of Old Vincennes,* and "scores of others."[113] Chambers believed that Bobbs-Merrill had sold more stories to the movies than all other publishers combined. Bobbs-Merrill author Clive Arden's *Sinners in Heaven* (1923) and *Enticement* (1924), sold through Curtis, brought the highest prices ever paid to a book publisher for film rights up to that time.[114]

In July 1923, the board of Bobbs-Merrill laid plans for a dinner in the local Woodstock Club, to be attended by the men of the firm, with Curtis as the guest of honor. The dinner was to commemorate his 50 years of service which dated back to his initial appointment by Silas T. Bowen at Bowen, Stewart and Company. The guests would be given souvenir copies of a recently issued pamphlet, *Hoosier House,* the only history of the firm to be published down to the present day.[115] This dinner took place the following month, almost exactly three years before Curtis would become president of the firm.[116]

When the board elected Curtis president in 1926, Chambers wrote Richard Halliburton that he, Curtis, was the only surviving member of the original Bobbs-Merrill partnership and his election was quite the obvious thing.[117] Curtis received an annual retirement salary of $5000 and his expenses as president.[118] He would continue to live in California and to receive a commission on the sale of books to the motion picture industry.[119] He had disposed of his Bobbs-Merrill stock with the exception of one share which qualified him to serve as a stockholder and an officer of the company.[120]

In June 1931, Curtis, then 74 years old, embarked upon a motor trip from Los Angeles to Vancouver, British Columbia, and on from there to Indianapolis. The purpose of the trip was a public relations gesture on behalf of the firm.[121] It was a fateful journey for the fourth president of Bobbs-Merrill. He arrived ill in Indianapolis on June 29; pneumonia took his life three weeks later.[122]

Curtis, as a semiretired president, offered a contrast to Bobbs who occupied himself daily with the management of the business. President Curtis visited the Indianapolis office twice each year.[123] In a memorandum to the board written a month or two after his election, Curtis spoke of his impending departure for the West Coast. He asked the directors to conduct the business "as usual," referring no matters to him until his return, except matters thought to be so important as to affect general policy.[124]

In 1929, Chambers, Kryter, Carr, and Moorhead, who were the major stockholders, gave themselves five-year contracts in their respective positions.[125] (The latter partner was Robert L. Moorhead, Law Department manager since 1904.) So lightly did the hand of Curtis rest upon the conduct of the business, and so comfortable were the other board members in managing the affairs of the firm, that for four years the board delayed filling the office which his death left vacant.[126]

In 1929, two years before Curtis died, he divested himself of his stock, disqualifying himself as a director and president of the firm. He was avoiding participation in the settlement which the directors made with the members of the Bobbs family who severed their connection with Bobbs-Merrill at that time. The circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of the heirs of his deceased partner were such that Curtis did not wish to preside over or participate in the negotiations and the reorganization which accompanied their departure.[127] When these matters were concluded, Curtis resumed his office.[128]

## THE REORGANIZATION OF 1929

The archives of the company afford no explanation for the departure of Julian Bobbs and his mother from the business which continued to bear their family name. The firm was reorganized to facilitate their withdrawal. A reliable acquaintance of Julian Bobbs reported that Bobbs saw himself as heir apparent to the leadership of Bobbs-Merrill. Attempts to play this role brought him into conflict with his older partners. His relationship to Chambers, the most influential member of the firm, was particularly hostile.

The younger Bobbs, son of W.C. Bobbs, had joined the staff of the home office in 1916 after he was transferred from the New York office.[129] In 1920, he became assistant treasurer and was made treasurer one year later.[130] Upon settlement of the estate of the senior Bobbs in 1927 or 1928, young Bobbs and his mother became major stockholders.[131] In June 1929, Julian Bobbs tendered his resignation as treasurer and as a director of the firm. On the day he resigned, the board met after his departure to declare a dividend of 38.3%. This action gave the remaining stockholders full benefit of surplus earnings before the surrendered stock was offered to others.[132] Another meeting of the board, which soon followed, saw approval of new bylaws permitting Bobbs-Merrill to "go public."[133] The stock of the heretofore closed corporation was publicly offered for sale. The purpose of the reorganization was to allow others to buy the stock held by Julian Bobbs and Mrs. W.C. Bobbs.[134] Approximately 16 persons appeared at the annual stockholders' meeting held a month after the retirement of the Bobbses. Most of these persons represented new personal and corporate investors. Despite the number of newcomers to the firm, Chambers, Moorhead, Kryter, and Carr retained control.[135]

A reliable interviewer of Julian Bobbs reported that the younger Bobbs, looking back on the event many years later, gloated with satisfaction when discussing what he believed to be a highly favorable settlement which he wrung from his partners in return for his withdrawal. The sale of his stock was indeed timely. Bobbs-Merrill was still caught up in the general prosperity of the 1920s.

## THE MERIDIAN STREET OFFICES

During the same prosperous decade, the company established its offices in a new location, moving for the fourth time since the merger which had occurred 41 years earlier. In the 1920s, Indianapolis planned the World

War Memorial Plaza. The downtown area which it would occupy required the condemnation and removal of 45 buildings including the Blind Asylum, the Elks Club, the Propylaeum, and the Bobbs-Merrill Building on the north side of University Square.[136] Forced to sell their building to the city, the Bobbs-Merrill directors decided to rent rather than build again. Late in the summer of 1926 the publishers were occupied with moving into the Parrot Building at 724 Meridian Street.[137] Historian Thomas D. Clark, who 16 years later first visited the company offices, described the property: "The Bobbs-Merrill Company was located on North Meridian Street in a narrow shotgun building. The facade of the building, with its muted classic columns, was as impressive as the company's stationery. On display on either side of the entry were Bobbs-Merrill books."[138]

The main floor of the building had originally been a showroom where electric cars were displayed and sold. The atmosphere of the place had changed to that of a busy publishing house, but all evidence of its former use had not vanished from the premises. On the floor of the great room were acid stains left by the dripping batteries of the automobiles.[139] The vast space now literally swarmed with the people who worked at what seemed to be endless rows of secretarial desks and offices.[140] A cubbyhole on the right was the only space occupied by the Educational Publishing Department from which the firm had sold millions of textbooks. On the first floor was also a conference room and the shipping department. A grand staircase led to a mezzanine. Corridors off the mezzanine connected with the Manuscripts Department, the Trade Department, the Law Department, and the Law Library. Secretaries at desks in the halls mounted guard over the entrance to executive suites, including the office of David Laurance Chambers, fifth president of the firm, who managed the company for 18 years beginning in 1935.[141]

## DAVID LAURANCE CHAMBERS

D.L. Chambers had come to Bobbs-Merrill in 1903 as personal secretary to President W.C. Bobbs.[142] Fifty-five years later, at the end of a distinguished career with the firm, he was made president emeritus of the Board of Directors after he had joined with Lowe Berger of the Textbook Department and Robert Moorhead of the Law Department to sell the controlling interest of Bobbs-Merrill to Howard W. Sams.[143]

Chambers was born in Washington, D.C. in 1879. His paternal great-grandfather, who moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio in 1810 to found a newspaper, had previously been employed in the Philadelphia print shop

of Benjamin Franklin.[144] A Phi Beta Kappan, Chambers not only graduated magna cum laude with an A.B. from Princeton in 1900, but according to popular novelist Inglis Fletcher (whose books Chambers edited), he also held the distinction of receiving the highest marks given in the history of the school with the exception of Aaron Burr.[145] After graduation Chambers remained at Princeton working as secretary to English professor Henry Van Dyke, in that day the dominant literary figure on campus. At the same time Chambers was earning an M.A. on a Charles Scribner Fellowship in English. He graduated in 1901.[146] He became a member of the Indianapolis firm in 1907—four years after he came to work for W.C. Bobbs—and was made vice-president of Bobbs-Merrill in 1921. In 1925, he succeeded Hewitt H. Howland as trade book editor and was elected president of the company ten years later (he served as president until 1953).[147] Chambers was chairman of the board from 1953 to 1958. He is remembered for his dual role as editor and managing president. As literary editor for almost 30 years, Chambers produced a daily stream of correspondence with the authors, sending forth advice, encouragement, cajolery, appreciation, admiration, condolence, admonition, unflinching resolution, and, now and then, a sharply-worded reprimand.[148] One Bobbs-Merrill author reported that Chambers was said to have an uncontrollable temper in the earlier days of his editorship; but, upon the advice of his doctor who feared he would have a heart attack, he learned not to indulge his violent emotions.[149] Only rarely did he outwardly acknowledge that the demands placed upon him could be wearisome, as when he wrote to H.S. Baker of the New York office in 1926: "One of the trials of life is the necessity of constantly showing an accommodating spirit to authors."[150]

Thomas Clark, who first called upon Chambers at the editorial office in 1939 with the manuscript of *The Rampaging Frontier* under his arm, described the physical appearance of the editor and company president as a tall, stooped, and graying figure of a man: "His shirt tail was out, his hair was rumpled and he looked at me over his pince-nez glasses as if I had brought a dead fish into the parlor. He made me sit down across the broad, tousled desk before him and talked in such a low voice that only by the grace of God could I tell what he was saying."[151]

Widely acquainted with the popular literary figures of the time in which he presided over at Bobbs-Merrill, Chambers edited the books of many of them, retaining form control of the trade list.[152] But the popularity of the books which composed his lists in the 1930s and 1940s did not match that of the big sellers in the 1920s. The difference was partly due to changing tastes in America. Chambers indulged a nostalgia for the genteel literary expression. He had no use for the rough language and realism of younger

writers such as Ernest Hemingway, James T. Farrell, and John Dos Passos who published with Bobbs-Merrill's competition.[153] Chambers maintained that the sale of Hemingway and Farrell declined as their use of obscenity grew.[154] But there was at least one occasion on which Chambers had found a way to publish a novel which he had received initially in an earthy version. The book was Pietro di Donato's *Christ in Concrete* (©1939). Having read the poignant short story by that title which had appeared in *Esquire* in 1937, the Bobbs-Merrill editors approved an advance payment on the royalties which would permit the writer to expand his story into a novel.[155]

The staff viewed the resultant manuscript with mixed emotion. There was praise for the powerful story based on the tragic life of di Donato's parents and siblings who lived in the New York ghetto. There was consternation that the work which the firm had sponsored and must now consider for publication was to Chambers and some of his assistants an obscene book.[156] After lengthy editorial conferences, Chambers reached a decision. He did not ask the author to revise his manuscript; Chambers or his representative would do it for him with deletion of the objectionable parts.[157] In the process of this accomplishment, di Donato was said to have acknowledged that dirty words were not necessary.[158] After he was verbally housebroken by his editor, di Donato was admitted cautiously to the circumspect company of the Bobbs-Merrill authors. They were a group whose writing W.C. Bobbs had characterized as "good, clean fiction and corking good tales."[159]

In contrast to the disturbing influence which di Donato had on the firm, Chambers was completely at ease with the works of two other best-selling novelists of the 1930s. They were Alice Tisdale Hobart and Inglis Fletcher. He liked to point with pride to their output which met his personal standard of literary decency.[160] Indeed Bobbs-Merrill owed much to the success of these two writers. The sale of their books, combined with the income from a few other titles, pulled the Trade Department through some lean years. The handful of other books which shared in this contribution included some children's books from the Childhood of Famous American series and Irma Rombauer's cookbook, *Joy of Cooking* (1936).[161]

Indiana author Glen Tucker, some of whose books Chambers edited, reported that there was a feeling in the office that Chambers preferred women for his readers and editors. The staff believed that he found women more compliant than men.[162] For whatever reason, his assistant or associate editors were usually women. One of them who was prominent in the editorial office during the 1930s was Jessica Mannon, daughter of Hilton

U. Brown, editor of the *Indianapolis News*. Mannon was also the wife of a local attorney. She was a social conservative who carried her distaste for the lack of refinement in literature even further than Chambers. When Emily Hahn's *Affair* (1935) was under consideration, Lynn Carrick of the New York office admonished Mannon not to allow her judgment to be prejudiced by what Carrick considered to be her puritanical Hoosier background.[163] But her negative vote did not influence the decision of the firm to publish the work.[164] Mannon found fault with some less controversial books. She objected to allusions to the rutting season in *Bambi's Children* (1939), a juvenile book by Felix Salten.[165] In response to Thomas D. Clark's wish to include an anecdote about miscegenation in his *Rampaging Frontier* (1939), Chambers vetoed the story; but according to Clark, it was Mannon who seized him by the coat lapels and said: "You can't publish that story!"[166] Reports of Mannon's sometimes fastidious conservatism must not be allowed to influence judgment of her value to Bobbs-Merrill. Her correspondence with authors reveals an intelligent and charming lady who carried responsibility well. She was a tireless revising editor. She and Chambers had toiled five years with novelist Inglis Fletcher during the Great Depression to bring *Raleigh's Eden* (1940) to a publishable state.[167]

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

During the period of this study, children's book publishing at Bobbs-Merrill was carried on as an activity of the Trade Book Department, with responsibility for editorial work given to trade book editors, Hewitt Howland, D.L. Chambers, and their assistants. Although Jessica Mannon bore much editorial responsibility for such works in the 1930s, Bobbs-Merrill was slower than some other leading publishers to appoint a full-time children's editor; Patricia Jones was named to that post in 1946.[168] Children's departments had existed in other publishing houses since about 1920.[169] Author Elizabeth Coatsworth reported that Macmillan had been the first publisher to establish such a department.[170] between 1901 and 1940 at Bobbs-Merrill, about 170 children's books were published;[171] these constitute only a small part of the trade books issued during those years. Only a few of the Bobbs-Merrill children's books have been thought by critics to have permanent value as literature. Scarcely anyone today can be expected to remember Bobbs-Merrill's early day successes such as Charles F. Goss's *Little Saint Sunshine* (1902), J.S. Gates's Live Dolls series, published in the early years of the twentieth century, or Edwin H. Lewis's *Almost Fairy Children* (©1909). The latter children were so named because they were inordinately good.[172]

But a few titles on the "Complete Back List of Juvenile Titles from Bobbs-Merrill" are significant. Among these is L. Frank Baum's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Bowen-Merrill, 1902), which has sold more widely than any other book published by the firm. It was first issued in 1901 by George M. Hill. But Hill went out of business that same year. Bowen-Merrill, with the Midas touch it possessed in the early days of the century, took over several of Baum's books from Hill. The *Wizard of Oz* was by far the best-selling children's book in America between 1895 and 1965, during which period about 5 million copies were marketed.[173] Dramatic rights were sold in the early days. Bobbs-Merrill had no claim on the motion picture rights and failed to come in for a share of the proceeds from the classic motion picture released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1939.[174]

In addition to *The Wizard of Oz*, the series called The Childhood of Famous Americans is notable because of a certain significance it bears to the history of children's book publishing. Before the Indianapolis firm began this series with the issue of Augusta Stevenson's *Abe Lincoln: Frontier Boy* (1932), there were few children's books which served to introduce young readers to history and biography. The success of this series did much to bring into focus the market potential for children's nonfiction series.[175] Despite its considerable influence in the field, COFAS, as its publishers have called the series, cannot be regarded as nonfiction. For example, there are volumes that describe the childhood experiences of Sacagawea, Pocahontas, Virginia Dare, and other persons about whose childhood nothing is known. Forty-one years after the publication of the first volume, COFAS had blossomed. There were 208 separate books that had followed *Abe Lincoln: Frontier Boy*. Bobbs-Merrill had taken that title as the model for the series, with each additional book incorporating its vocabulary limits, technique of character development, and the other characteristics. Stevenson had unknowingly set the formula when she wrote the little book which sold so well in the days of the Depression when many other books did not perform.[176]

## LAW PUBLISHING IN THE DEPRESSION

Law books were in the doldrums in the 1930s. In 1933, the Law Department was confronted with the largest backlog of manuscripts in its history. It was committed to issue that year a total of 48 volumes; but the editorial and mechanical facilities available were adequate to produce a maximum of 30 volumes.[177] The overcommitment was an arrearage of manuscripts many of which the company had planned to publish as far back as two years earlier.[178] The delay was occasioned by reluctance to proceed with the issue

of books which would probably find an unsatisfactory market at that time.[179] Law school professor William Page voiced the impatience of authors whose manuscripts languished in the fireproof company vault. Manuscripts such as his *Cases and Readings on the Law of Contracts* would simply be outdated if they were not soon forthcoming from the presses.[180] In 1935 Bobbs-Merrill would still give an author no firm date for the appearance of his/her law book.[181]

One of the last recorded actions of the Board of Directors during the period covered by this history resulted in a severe reduction in the law publishing program; in 1935 the board approved plans calling for the abandonment of unprofitable territories; the elimination of unproductive salesmen, and the reduction of five full-time and two part-time persons from the editorial staff. There was thought to be a corresponding introduction of labor- and timesaving processes in editorial work. Additional savings were to be realized by issuing smaller volumes and by decreasing the number of new titles published in a year. At the same time, the department was prepared to mount a sales campaign on older publications carried in stock.[182] The precise effect these economies had on the Law Department is not known, but it is certain that Bobbs-Merrill continued in financial difficulty for some time.[183]

## TRADE BOOK PUBLISHING IN THE DEPRESSION

Because of lagging trade and law book sales, most staff of these units had had their pay cut by 10% in January 1932. The general office staff received the same treatment, but no reference is found in the record to a pay reduction for textbook staff.[184] The inference is that textbook sales were satisfactory. Later that year the directors saw fit to invest up to $35,000 in a new set of readers.[185] These books, the Curriculum Readers, appeared in 1934. George Betts, a professor of education at Northwestern University whom Carr had selected as general editor of the project, advised the authors of the Bobbs-Merrill Readers at the outset that the goal was to "produce a distinctive series with points of excellence sufficiently marked to attract attention and be beyond controversy."[186] He went on to warn the authors that they must keep in mind the psychology of school boards, superintendents, and other officials. "The books must be grounded on methods known and familiar, so that the publishers should not be classed as fadists and the books be turned down as brilliant but eccentric."[187] The Curriculum Readers were revised in 1937, the year Carr retired to be succeeded by Lowe Berger who would head up the Educational Publishing Department.[188] Berger was an energetic and productive department manager. He

traveled continuously to all parts of the nation, selling, publicizing, and collecting information from educators about what was wanted in the way of textbooks. Under Berger's management, the schools became laboratories in which textbooks were tested prior to publication. When the company embarked upon the development of a new series, a wide number of educators were invited to make recommendations on the contents. When the authors prepared the manuscript, it was mimeographed and sent to the advisors for suggested deletions and additions. From this response, a sample book was manufactured and distributed to certain schools over the country in an effort to obtain student reaction to the text. After extended testing of this sort, the final plates were made and the textbook was manufactured. The most important Bobbs-Merrill texts in 1940 were the Curriculum Readers, Edith Shepard and Mary R. Parkman's Language and Grammar Series, William Krickenberger's *Bobbs-Merrill Algebra*, and Emerson and Betts's *Habits of Right Living*, which succeeded their *Hygiene and Health*. In 1940, Bobbs-Merrill had state adoptions in Kansas and Indiana. In the years immediately preceding United States entry into World War II, the Educational Publishing Department was the division for which the firm was best known, notwithstanding that the Trade and Law Departments were older.[189]

## WORLD WAR II AND AFTER

In 1941 the American economy was rapidly recovering under the stimulus of World War II. The Bobbs-Merrill Company had concealed its financial condition from competitors since 1930 with the suppression of the annual balance sheet. In 1941 the firm resumed the practice of including the balance sheet and the operating statement in the minutes of the annual meeting of the stockholders. These financial records were included in the company archives. They cover the years 1941 through 1945 and for 1947. Statistics for net sales were omitted from the reports; however, by considering the percent of return on investment, it is possible to make comparisons of the financial status of the firm during the war years with its financial condition during the prosperous times leading up to the Depression. The percent of return on investment has been determined by dividing the amount of the owner's equity in the firm for a given year by the figure representing the annual profit. The owner's equity has been defined here to mean the sum of the common stock and the undivided profits. Table 4 affords a comparison of the two periods.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT
1926-1930 COMPARED WITH 1941-1946

| *Year* | *Percentage* | *Year* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1926 | 22.2 | 1941 | 43.0 |
| 1927 | 34.1 | 1942 | -5.9 |
| 1928 | 23.6 | 1943 | 13.7 |
| 1929 | 17.5 | 1944 | 12.1 |
| 1930 | 20.6 | 1945 | 8.7 |
| Average | 23.6 | Average | 14.3 |

The firm made a profit throughout the war, except for the year 1942. Profits were undoubtedly reduced by the wartime excess profits tax which was levied on American business in 1940. The high percentage of return for 1941 is not specifically explained in the absence of a record of the net sales or earnings by departments, but the trade book *Exit Laughing* by Irving S. Cobb was the ninth best-selling nonfiction book in America that year. The Trade Department also had two significant novels during this period. They were Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* (1943), which would sell 2,904,105 copies in 32 years, and Inglis Fletcher's *Lusty Wind for Carolina* (1944), which would find purchasers for a little more than 1 million copies. Although Bobbs-Merrill's return on investment rose to 28.1% in 1947, the earnings were mainly from law and textbook publishing. The health series of the Educational Publishing Department was in use in the school systems of 17 states and 170 cities.[190] As was often the case, trade book sales had declined again. It was in this period that Thomas D. Clark delivered his manuscript of *Southern Country Editor* (1948) to associate editor Rosemary York, successor to Jessica Mannon. Clark heard from York that new contracts must be negotiated with trade book authors at lower royalty rates than originally established.[191]

## HIRAM HAYDN AND THE EARLY 1950S

Hiram Haydn, who edited for Bobbs-Merrill in the New York office in the early 1950s revealed that the company's greatest source of revenue came through the Law Department from a contract with the state of Indiana for printing state documents. Haydn reported that the success of the Law Department was rivaled by textbook publishing under the management of Berger who had built up that aspect of the business since coming over from

Appleton-Century in 1937. Haydn felt that several factors were working against the Trade Department. In his posthumously published autobiography, he observed that the Indianapolis office did not delegate adequate authority to the New York editor. Haydn complained that the New York editor had to go to Indianapolis with each decision for the approval of Chambers. Haydn felt that this procedure put the editor at disadvantage in his efforts to compete for promising books. Other editors were free to decide for themselves or, at least, had immediate access to higher administration.

Haydn also reported that Chambers was unwilling to match the advances on royalty payments which other New York firms were beginning to offer. George Brett of Macmillan and Chambers were the industry's last holdouts in the practice of selling books on consignment. Consequently, booksellers were unwilling to place such large orders with Bobbs-Merrill as they placed with the firms which accepted returns. Nevertheless, the Trade Department regained a measure of vitality under Haydn's editorship. He had joined Bobbs-Merrill in 1951 and remained three years. It is no accident that his stay coincided with the rejuvenation of the trade list; his accomplishment of this feat was punctuated by traumatic clashes with Chambers. Haydn eventually wrung from the older man the freedom to select and edit as he saw fit.[192] The most successful book to come from the Bobbs-Merrill presses during Haydn's period was William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness* (1951). A number of other new authors published with the firm at this time; these included George Mandel, Thomas Gallagher, Jefferson Young, and William Michfelder. Their books secured both favorable reviews and profit for the publisher. In 1953, Bobbs-Merrill had a Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC) selection; the volume was Robert Reynolds's *The Sinner of Saint Ambrose* (1952). It was the first time the company had scored in this competition since BOMC had distributed *Christ in Concrete* 14 years earlier.[193] Elmer Davis's *But We Were Born Free* (1954) was the ninth best-selling book in America in the year it was published.[194]

Most of the excitement which Haydn had brought to the Trade Department vanished when he, like several competent New York office editors before him, departed the firm for a better job. Late in 1954 he accepted Bennett Cerf's offer to edit for Random House under terms which he found to be more liberal than those afforded by the Bobbs-Merrill position.[195]

The year before Haydn left, Chambers completed his fiftieth year with Bobbs-Merrill and his eighteenth year as president. At this point he relinquished the presidency to become chairman of the board.[196] According to

Haydn, the old publisher could not now control the board which he, as president, had long dominated. Lowe Berger had watched over him in his failing years, and Berger now assumed the presidency. It was a position which he evidently could have filled sooner had he not declined to do so out of loyalty to Chambers.[197] But Chambers would come daily to his office for five more years.[198]

In 1958, rumors circulated throughout the publishing world that Bobbs-Merrill was for sale. Trade gossip identified various prospective buyers.[199] In November of that year, Howard W. Sams of Indianapolis announced that he had purchased the firm.[200] Chambers, Moorhead, and Berger had joined to sell him the controlling interest for $1 million.[201] Sams, who was 61 at the time of the purchase, had founded Howard W. Sams and Company 12 years earlier in Indianapolis. In 12 years the firm had succeeded in electronics research and publishing. Sams had also established a printing affiliate, the Waldemar Press, which was the largest self-contained, offset printing press company in Indiana. Waldemar would play an important role in the production of books published by Sams's new subsidiary, the Bobbs-Merrill Company.[202] A writer for a local newspaper accurately observed: "It's been a long time since this 120-year-old (i.e., 108-year-old) house was among the leaders in this popular field of the American publishing business."[203] In fiscal year 1958, Bobbs-Merrill had operated at a loss.[204] But Sams resolved to strengthen the firm, and he did indeed revitalize the business. He began with a reorganization through which he became chairman of the board.[205] He assumed the presidency on an acting basis while he sought "an outstanding figure" in American publishing who would occupy that office.[206] In March 1959, M. Hughes Miller, vice-president of American Book-Stratford Press, left his position to become president of Bobbs-Merrill. Miller had earlier been associated with Charles E. Merrill Books, Wesleyan University Press, and the American Education Press.[207]

A year earlier, Sams had moved Bobbs-Merrill from the familiar Meridian Street plant into the Williamson Candy Company Building at Sixty-second Street and Guion Road, a location which the firm would share with the publishing facilities of the Howard W. Sams and Company and the Waldemar Press.[208]

Upon assuming control of Bobbs-Merrill, Sams proceeded to make large investments in advertising. New trade titles, including Jules Dubois's *Fidel Castro* (1959), James A. Rhodes and Dean Jauchiu's *Trial of Mary Todd Lincoln* (1959), and Robert Dahl's *Breakdown* (1959) were vigorously advertised in the pages of *The New York Times* daily and *The New York Times Book Review*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Los Angeles Times*,

the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Boston Herald*, the *New Yorker*, *Newsweek*, and a number of other nationally circulating newspapers and periodicals.[209] Four years after Sams took over the company, an advertising campaign costing $100,000 pushed the latest (1953) edition of Irma S. Rombauer's *Joy of Cooking* up to sixth position on Hackett's list of best-selling nonfiction books of the year.[210]

Sams also sought to strengthen the Educational Publishing Department. In 1959, Bobbs-Merrill acquired the Public School Publishing Company and the Gregory Publishing Company, both of Cincinnati. In addition to textbooks, these companies were publishers of some of the nation's most widely-used personality, aptitude, and other educational texts.[211] A year later Sams purchased Scribner's elementary textbook lists of science and social sciences, as well as Scribner's history texts for grades one through nine.[212] In 1961, a newly established Bobbs-Merrill college division took over the Liberal Arts Press, publishers of a quality paperback list of more than 180 classics in political science, philosophy, history, religion, and the fine arts.[213]

Under Sams, the Law Department was primarily concerned with the publication of texts and casebooks for the use of law schools. An innovation by the department in 1958 was the issue of a three-hour album of recordings by trial lawyer Melvin M. Belli of San Francisco. The purpose of the album was to bring the student of trial practice into the courtroom. The recordings reproduced opening statements and closing arguments which Belli had used before juries in some of his notable trial cases. The success of this album led to the production of other albums by Bobbs-Merrill in which noted lawyers presented arguments for both the plaintiff and the defendant, and gave examples of expert cross examination in the courtroom.[214]

Although Bobbs-Merrill had now ceased to be counted among the country's leading publishing houses, the new beginnings under Sams had restored financial stability to the firm. In the year ending 30 June 1960 the combined sale of trade books, law books, and textbooks, was more than $3 million—the largest in company history.[215]

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Between the early 1850s and the middle 1880s, five successive bookselling organizations in Indianapolis bore the name of Merrill. From 1885 to 1900, Bowen-Merrill was nationally known because it published the poetry of

James Whitcomb Riley. At the turn of the century, the company gained momentum under the leadership of W.C. Bobbs and John Curtis. President Bobbs shaped the Trade, Law, and Educational Departments into an organization which could survive through financial interdependence of these branches. His most anxious concern was for the Trade Department.

Trade books were not written by formula to fill a prescribed need. Their success could not be predicted with any degree of assurance, and one success must cover the cost of many failures. In contrast to the trade book editors, who had to rely upon intuition in the selection of manuscripts, the law book editors found means of responding to market needs which were known in advance of publication. A competent team of law book salesmen was able to discern from lawyers the book needs of the American bar. The Bobbs-Merrill Company, in creating its law lists, fully exploited the information which the sales force provided, and published law books for which there was a continuing demand, except during periods of economic depression.

Predictably successful school books were developed by editors and authors closely attuned to the curricular needs of the public schools. In order to assure this success, the editors sometimes used the schools as laboratories in which the product was tested before it was manufactured. A state-adopted text normally attained a sale equal to or greater than a best-selling trade book. Textbook sales were less affected by economic depression than trade and law books. Over the years, textbooks earned more income than either trade or law books. Earnings from textbooks and law book sales lent financial stability to the firm and subsidized the Trade Department when its existence was threatened by deficit operations.

The fortunes of the unstable Trade Department fluctuated widely. A period of success in the early 1900s came as a result of the efforts of John Curtis in connection with book advertising and promotion, areas in which he ultimately influenced the course of American book publishing. He guided the Trade Department first as its manager, and then, after 1900, as Eastern editorial representative in the New York office. When he occupied the president's office between 1926 and 1931, he was past the creative period of his career. In constrast with Bobbs, who, as president, was an active manager, Curtis, as president, had little to do with the routine management of the business; however, he was active at that time as chairman of the board, with managers developed by Bobbs still running the firm. After remarkable growth in the 1920s, Bobbs-Merrill declined in the 1930s.

Chambers was president during the difficult period of the Depression. He ruled Bobbs-Merrill with a firm hand. It would be unfair to saddle him

with blame for the bad state of the business in the 1930s; but his concepts of the book trade were conservative for the time as was the literary taste reflected in his editorial practices. His retirement in 1953 was indicated. In earlier days the Indianapolis firm had attracted young men whose abilities were nurtured as they grew into positions of leadership and authority. Notable among these were Chambers himself, Bobbs, and Curtis. But these men left no heirs capable of replacing them. Indeed, in later years, Chambers's dictatorial and single-handed management style did, on occasion, restrict the retention of able staff. Except for Curtis, each gifted editor who ran the New York office left Bobbs-Merrill and moved up in the profession. Howard Sams, who purchased the firm in 1958, gave it financial stability once more, but he could not restore the old publishing house to a position of first importance in the book trade.

Bobbs-Merrill has made numerous contributions to American book publishing, Through Curtis the firm led the way to national acceptance of new techniques in mass advertising including the use of full-page advertisements employing striking illustrations. As a publisher of the popular book, the firm was foremost in the discovery of new talent. Among its big sellers were first books by once popular authors such as Charles Major, Gene Stratton Porter, Meredith Nicholson, Mary Roberts Rinehart, James Oliver Curwood, Richard Halliburton, Julia Peterkin, Earl Derr Biggers, Pietro di Donato, and Inglis Fletcher.

In addition to popular books, scholarly books also appeared on the trade list. These were works, chiefly in history and biography, which were never annual best-sellers. The editorship in the firm was in keeping with the mores of middle-class America. The handling of the work of Pietro di Donato in the late 1930s found the editors ill at ease with unconventional ideas and language. Schoolbook editing leaned toward conservatism, with the publication of texts based on teaching methods known to adoption agencies.

The firm has never been a leading publisher of children's books, but L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was, by a wide margin, the best-selling juvenile title published in America between 1895 and 1965.

Although it was fictional biography, the popular Childhood of Famous Americans series included books which were among the first to call to the attention of children's publishers the ready market for biography written for children. Through the firm's sympathy for regional literature and its ability to provide a national market for the works of local authors, Bobbs-Merrill was a major factor in the flowering of Indiana literature.

Worthy of mention is the sense of pride which the location of a major publishing house in Indiana brought to the people of the state, and in particular, to those of Indianapolis. The pride of the city in its bookshops and in the local publication of books extends back to its founding period. Booth Tarkington wrote of his city and of the firm for which he felt a special regard:

> The significant life of a city is not in its size, but in its beauty and cleanliness and in the culture of its citizens. Most of all, a city's significance is in that culture, and nowhere has the culture of Indianapolis found a better expression than in the publishing house known as the Bobbs-Merrill Company.[18]

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## VITA

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